

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF DARKNESS

edited by

Marion Dowd and Robert Hensey



Oxbow Books
Oxford & Philadelphia

Published in the United Kingdom in 2016 by
OXBOW BOOKS
10 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford OX1 2EW

and in the United States by
OXBOW BOOKS
1950 Lawrence Road, Havertown, PA 19083

© Oxbow Books and the individual contributors 2016

Paperback Edition: ISBN 978-1-78570-191-7
Digital Edition: ISBN 978-1-78570-192-4

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission from the publisher in writing.

Printed in ****

For a complete list of Oxbow titles, please contact:

UNITED KINGDOM
Oxbow Books
Telephone (01865) 241249, Fax (01865) 794449
Email: oxbow@oxbowbooks.com
www.oxbowbooks.com

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Oxbow Books
Telephone (800) 791-9354, Fax (610) 853-9146
Email: queries@casemateacademic.com
www.casemateacademic.com/oxbow

Oxbow Books is part of the Casemate Group

Front cover: ***

Back cover: ***

Contents

List of figures.....	vii
List of plates.....	ix
List of tables.....	x
Introduction	xi
List of contributors	xv
1. Past dark: a short introduction to the human relationship with darkness over time	1
<i>Robert Hensey</i>	
2. Darkness visible. Shadows, art, and the ritual experience of caves in Upper Palaeolithic Europe	11
<i>Paul B. Pettitt</i>	
3. Between symbol and senses: the role of darkness in ritual in prehistoric Italy	25
<i>Ruth D. Whitehouse</i>	
4. Experiencing darkness and light in caves: later prehistoric examples from Seulo in central Sardinia.....	39
<i>Robin Skeates</i>	
5. The dark side of the sky: the orientations of earlier prehistoric monuments in Ireland and Britain.....	51
<i>Richard Bradley</i>	
6. In search of darkness: cave use in Late Bronze Age Ireland	63
<i>Marion Dowd</i>	
7. Digging into the darkness: the experience of copper mining in the Great Orme, North Wales.....	75
<i>Sian James</i>	
8. Between realms: entering the darkness of the hare paenga in ancient Rapa Nui (Easter Island)	85
<i>Sue Hamilton and Colin Richards</i>	

9. Dark places and supernatural light in early Ireland	101
<i>John Carey</i>	
10. Enfolded by the long winter's night	107
<i>Charlotte Damm</i>	
11. 'The outer darkness of madness' – the Edwardian Winter Garden at Purdysburn public asylum for the insane	117
<i>Gillian Allmond</i>	
12. Descent into darkness	129
<i>Tim O'Connell</i>	
13. Coming in and out of the dark	139
<i>Gabriel Cooney</i>	
Plates	145

Chapter 8

Between realms: entering the darkness of the *hare paenga* in ancient Rapa Nui (Easter Island)

Sue Hamilton and Colin Richards

Introduction

One of the most well-known and spectacular feats of prehistoric monumentality is to be found on the small island of Rapa Nui (Easter Island) in the South Pacific. Here, from c. 1200–1600 AD, over three hundred massive ‘stone men’ (*moai*) were quarried, dragged and erected on elevated stone platforms known as image *ahu* (Pl. 10); a term used to distinguish *ahu* with statues as opposed to those without (Martinsson-Wallin 1994, 52–3; Van Tilburg 1994, 77). Over two hundred more remain in various states of completion at the great *moai* quarry of Rano Raraku (Skjølsvold 1961). Many other *moai* lie recumbent along the statue roads (*ara moai*) that lead toward Rano Raraku (Richards *et al.* 2011). However, it is the imagery of the *moai* on the *ahu* with their extraordinary topknots (*pukao*) that once adorned their heads that tends to dominate the popular (and archaeological) imagination. In many ways this view is warranted; as Charles Love notes, the ‘Easter Island ceremonial centres, collectively called *ahu* represent one of the most elaborate and complex examples of religious architecture ever developed by Polynesians’ (1993, 103). In this quote, Love highlights another important consideration: that despite its physical and supposed cultural isolation, Rapa Nui represents the eastern-most corner of the Polynesian triangle. Therefore, archaeological understandings of the *ahu* have to be situated in a broader Polynesian context, whilst acknowledging the local setting where the monuments directly participated in the constitution of ancient Rapa Nui ritual life.

Both visually and materially the image *ahu* were truly remarkable monumental structures. The beautifully sculpted *moai* with their red scoria cylindrical *pukao* stood in an elevated position on elongated rectangular, sometimes canoe-shaped, platforms. The sea-facing rear wall of the platform was carefully constructed with close-fitting black basalt slabs. The frontage was formed by a sloping ramp surfaced with large rounded beach stones called *poro*, which led down to an open plaza. Behind the *ahu*, crematoria were often positioned adjacent to the ocean.

Today, at the image *ahu*, the majority of *moai* lie recumbent, as do the *pukao*, but originally they stood elevated on the platforms facing inland (Pl. 10). Interestingly, during excavations at Ahu Nau Nau, on the north shore of the island, fragments of

white coral and disks of red scoria were recovered which together formed eyes for the *moai* (Heyerdahl 1989, 217–9; Van Tilburg 1994, 132–3). Eyes ‘were believed to embody the *mana*, life or soul of the individual’, noted Handy (1927, 65). Consequently, when the eyes were inserted, the *moai* became animated, and their gaze was inland towards the rising ground beyond the plaza area.

At this point it is worth noting that the *ahu* are not isolated monuments, but form part of broader *ahu* landscapes which incorporate a range of different structures (Hamilton *et al.* 2011). One of the most fascinating components is the canoe-shaped houses, known as *hare paenga*. In this paper we wish to examine the *hare paenga* in terms of the qualities associated with ‘being inside and outside’ the house. Specifically, we are interested in the experience of passage between the outside world of daylight and into an internalized domain that is constantly cloaked in darkness. We then intend to extend this experience of passage and transgression to bring insight into the broader landscape position of the monumental *ahu*. We argue that to enter the *hare paenga* was homologous to passing beneath the gaze of the *moai* and a journey from the land to the sea. We also argue that the materiality of the *hare paenga* drew on that of the seashore to create analogous experiences of passage between the cosmological domains of *Ao* and *Po*.

An island wrapped in images

The vast majority of *ahu* tend to be constructed in close proximity to the sea (Fig. 8.1). This is an interesting distribution, as not only are the *ahu* situated along the coastline but they really are ‘on the edge’ in being positioned effectively between land and sea. This situation is precarious as today a substantial number of *ahu* are being severely eroded and undermined by the relentless pounding surf of the Pacific Ocean. Such a pattern of erosion also reveals an unexpected topographic characteristic of the image *ahu*; they are frequently positioned in low-lying areas such as at the base of shallow valleys running down to the sea. Indeed, when travelling along the island’s southern coast, it is only as one rounds steep coastal bends that image *ahu* are seen, before falling out of view again. The overall impression of their situation is that the monuments are almost hidden and the vistas to and from the *ahu* are restricted to their immediate valley environs. At first sight it seems paradoxical that such large expressions of monumentality should be built in such unassuming low-lying locations that serve to diminish their overall presence and visual impact (Hamilton 2010).

A resolution to this paradox can be found in a reconsideration of *ahu* architecture. Here, the identification of what is referred to as an *ahu* complex (Martinsson-Wallin 1994, 68) or complex *ahu* (Van Tilburg 1994, 79) is of value. The attribution of such complexity is due to the recognition that *ahu* are frequently composed of a series or grouping of different architectural components (e.g. Love 1993). These include *ahu* platforms, crematoria, plaza areas and paved ramps descending to the ocean. Curiously, in the literature the significance of the paved ramps has been over-looked despite their obvious central position in the overall spatial organization of the *ahu* complex (Fig. 8.2). For example, in her multivariate analysis of *ahu*, Martinsson-Wallin (1994, 54–5) failed to include their presence/absence as a variable.

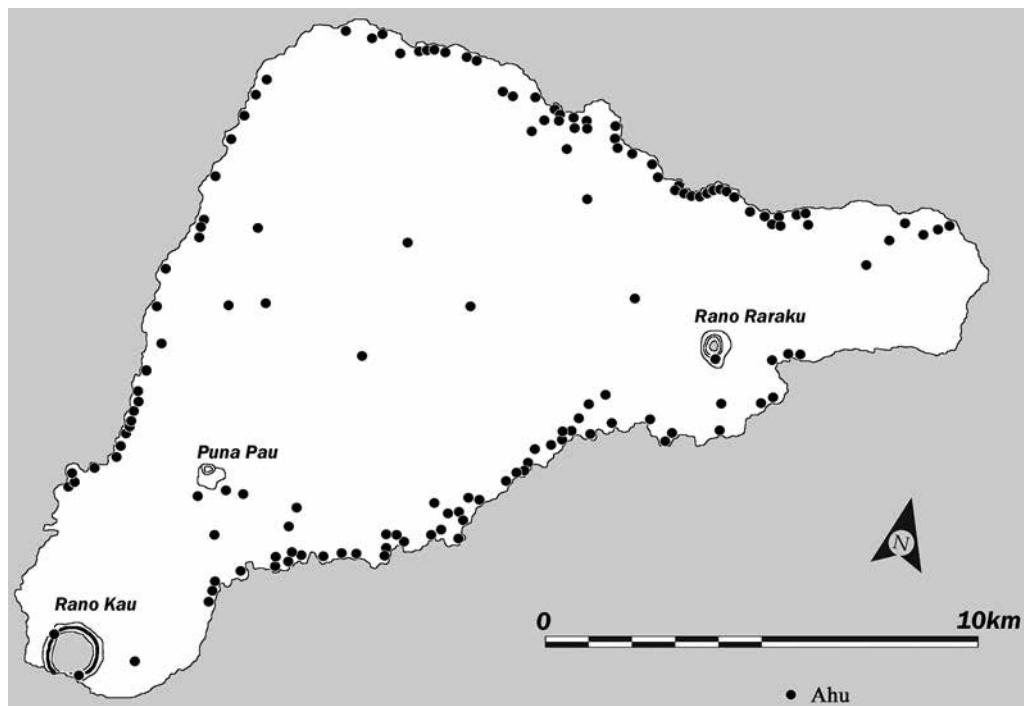


Figure 8.1: Distribution of ahu on Rapa Nui (after Lee 1992 and Martinsson-Wallin 1994).



Figure 8.2: The canoe ramp assumes a central position in the ahu complex at Tahai, on the west coast of Rapa Nui (Adam Stanford).

The ramps have not always been neglected. In his popular account of the 1955–6 Norwegian expedition, Thor Heyerdahl recalls that, ‘in many parts of the island we had seen wide paved roads which disappeared straight down into the sea’ (1958, 190). He also noted that they were called *apapa*. However, in attributing function he considered that the ramps were roads upon which topknots (*pukao*) would have been unloaded after they had been transported to the *ahu* by sea: ‘one *apapa* ran down to a shallow inlet at the foot of a large temple platform on the south coast. The inlet was full of boulders that the old navigators had had to clear a wide channel to enable craft to come alongside the landing stage’ (*ibid.*, 191). Significantly, during its reconstruction Mulloy (1995, 37) effectively reversed this interpretation in identifying the *apapa* structures as canoe ramps at the Tahai *ahu* complex. He emphasized the ramps as, ‘necessary solutions to the problem of protection of canoes on an island plagued by continuous high seas and extremely rocky coastlines’ (*ibid.*, 37). That the necessary protection for canoes was among a massive monumental complex was ignored, as was the significance and *tapu* (ritual prescription and sanctity) attached to launching a canoe throughout Polynesia (e.g. Best 1976 [1925], 164–5).

The centrality of the canoe ramp at Tahai could have important implications. If access to the ocean was an important criterion for the situation of image *ahu*, then their low-lying coastal locations become comprehensible. Perhaps we can go further in suggesting that *ahu* complexes were situated to control *access to the sea* at particular times. There is another consequence of the extensive coastal distribution of *ahu*, and that is the creation of a skin or membrane of monumental architecture that effectively wraps the island. In short, the *ahu* complex on Rapa Nui can be partially understood as a desire to ritually control access to the sea on specific occasions. Instead of the canoe ramps being epiphenomenal architecture, they were in fact a central component of the *ahu* complex.

If canoe ramps were central, it begs the question why such monumentality should be deployed between the land and sea? Secondly, given the architecture of the *ahu*, why should certain journeys from the land to the sea require passage before the eyes of the *moai*? In order to address these questions it is necessary to consider the relational spatial categories that Polynesians employed to differentiate between island topographic zones. For Hawai‘i, Malo (1951 [1898], 16–7) identifies a geocentric ordering of island space with the belt of land bordering the sea being called *kahakai* (the mark of the ocean). The division of land and sea also provided a spatially defined frame of reference, as Hyslop notes, ‘it is the distinction of landward versus seaward which is salient in the absolute systems of the island residing, seafaring peoples of Oceania’ (2002, 51). Reflexively, such an ordering of space in an island world inevitably emphasizes visible and important physical boundaries such as the seashore, allowing an inward–outward directional category to co-exist with concentric layers. Consequently, as François mentions in discussing linguistic categories of directionality in Vanuatu, ‘the island is perceived as a container, the outside of which corresponds to the surrounding sea’ (2003, 426).

It is also quite clear that in the past Polynesians maintained an ambivalent and ambiguous relationship with the ocean which on the one hand provided food and sustenance in abundance through fishing (e.g. Best 1977 [1929]; Barber 2003), and on the other was home to both supernatural enemies and monsters (Orbell 1985, 137). In

the context of voyaging, the Pacific Ocean has been consistently described as a route or roadway (e.g. Gladwin 1970, 33–6; Kirch 2000; Richards 2008). In conceiving the ocean in such a manner, as a route (*ara*) or conduit, it effectively drew disparate places together, thereby potentially fusing widely separated islands and ocean pathways within a single *locale* (cf. Heidegger 1978, 354).

In terms of cosmology, the creation of the Polynesian world occurred with the brief fusion of the complimentary and antagonistic opposites *Ao* (darkness, underworld, inner, earth, female) and *Po* (lightness, upper-world, outer, sky, male) (e.g. Handy 1927, 34–9; Goldman 1970, 37). After the creation of the inhabited world, they remained ‘cosmic principles constituting the dual order of the universe’ (Bausch 1978, 175). The manifestation of *Ao* and *Po* is complex. For instance, *Po* is recognized as both sacred and an underworld, and was frequently associated with a locality or place such as *Hawaiki* (Handy 1927, 34–5). Nevertheless, Handy ultimately concludes that *Po* ‘should be regarded more properly as signifying a state of existence’ (*ibid.*, 69). A corollary of the ocean as a conduit allowed at certain junctures linkage of the inhabited world to the origin island *Hawaiki*. Such a conjunction of places and realms, which could be problematic if not extremely dangerous, clearly required some form of ritual control and sanction.

Because Polynesian cosmology was based on procreation, social reproduction in Polynesia depended on the intermittent conjunction of one realm with the other – the ‘irruption’ of *Po* into *Ao* (Gell 1993, 126). For this irruption to occur a conduit had to open between the two realms. In the context of the human body, ‘orifices were important ... because they played a central role in the channelling of *mana* between the realms of *ao* and *po*’ (Shore 1989, 147). Childbirth is an obvious example of conjunction between *Po* and *Ao*, and the vagina acted ‘like other orifices, as a conduit between this world and the other’ (Thomas 1990, 70).

Another example of passage between these realms is represented by the journey of the soul on death from the world of the living (*Ao*) to the sacred realm (*Po*). At the end of a person’s life it was time for the soul to leave the island world and venture back to *Hiva*, the Rapa Nui equivalent of *Hawaiki*. Access to *Hiva* necessarily involved passing into the realm of *Po* and throughout Polynesia, ‘it was generally believed that there was a definite route or path taken by souls of the departed on their way to the next world’ (Handy 1927, 71). Access to the ancestral realm *Hawaiki* often involved travelling across an island in a westerly direction to a specific coastal location, where the spirit ‘jumped off’ into the depths of the ocean to continue the journey westwards and downwards. Spirit roads or paths leading westwards to a ‘jumping off’ point were present throughout Eastern Polynesia, including Hawai’i where spirits made their way to Keana Point at the north-west tip of Oahu (*ibid.*, 71). A similar belief existed in the Marquesas:

The souls of the Marquesans passed along the high mountain ridge that forms the backbone of the main island of their group to the high promontory at the west called Kiukiu ... Below the promontory was a rock. When the souls clapped their hands this opened, the sea rolled back, and the soul entered the nether world. (Handy 1927, 72)

These accounts of the passage taken by the soul back to *Hawaiki* are illuminating. They each involve entering the darkness of the underworld as represented by the ocean and a cave. This

journey from lightness to darkness reverses the qualities and necessities of birth, embracing both the transformatory qualities of voyaging to *Hawaiki* and the passage into the sacred subterranean world of *Po*. Under such circumstance, the membrane or skin separating these domains is of crucial importance, as is control over any potential transgression. Here, the idea of the island as a container is useful because under such circumstances the nature and materiality of containment is of crucial ontological concern and anxiety.

The *hare paenga*

The architecture of the canoe-shaped houses (*hare paenga*) of Rapa Nui is unique within the Polynesian triangle. Prehistoric Polynesian houses with rounded ends have been recorded in Samoa, Mo'orea and Hawai'i (Van Tilburg 1994, 71), but none resemble the clear boat-shaped ground plan and profile of the *hare paenga*. A resemblance between the *hare paenga* and the cabin of a model Tuamotuan double-hulled voyaging canoe prompted Edwin Ferdon Jr (1981, 3–6) to suggest that the initial colonists of Rapa Nui were from the Tuamotu islands. On landing, the cabin would be removed from the voyaging canoe and set up as the first habitation on the island, as was documented for the island of Karaka in the Tuamotu islands (Emory 1975, 58). Accepting multiple landings on Rapa Nui, Ferdon (1981, 5) considered this important, as the *hare paenga* would have represented a material symbol of certain ranking members of a particular immigrant group. Regardless of the origins of the *hare paenga* it does represent a particularly striking form of architecture that is clearly referencing the morphology of a canoe.

Interestingly, in constitution the *hare paenga* combined a range of different materials drawn together from different *locales*. The foundation of the house was formed by a series of partially dressed rectangular basalt slabs (*paenga*) that had holes drilled into their upper surface. These were partially sunk into the ground to create an elliptical house plan with a narrow side entrance passage (Fig. 8.3). The upper frame of the house was fabricated from a combination of timber, rushes, grasses and leaves. A number of thin wooden posts, which acted as rafters, were set in the holes of the *paenga* and drawn together at the top and attached to a ridgepole (*hahanga* or *hakarava*). Some of the larger houses were additionally supported by ridge posts (*pou* or *tuu*). Due to the elliptical setting of the *paenga*, the house gradually narrowed from the centre and the supporting posts correspondingly decreased in length. This effectively lowered the roof height of the house at either end. Successive layers of rushes, leaves and grasses were then applied to form a thick thatched roof to the house (Routledge 2005 [1919], 215; Metraux 1971 [1940], 197–8). As an outside extension to the house, the entrance porch and 'courtyard' were floored with rounded beach pebbles (*poro*) creating a semi-circular external area (Figs. 8.3 and 8.4).

Landscape associations, particularly with *ahu*, have tended to reinforce the interpretation of the *hare paenga* as a high status dwelling (e.g. Lee 1992, 118; Flenley and Bahn 2002, 94); possibly occupied by 'chiefs and their relatives' (Martinsson-Wallin 1994, 124), or 'high-status priests and chiefs' (Van Tilburg 2003, 237–8). This

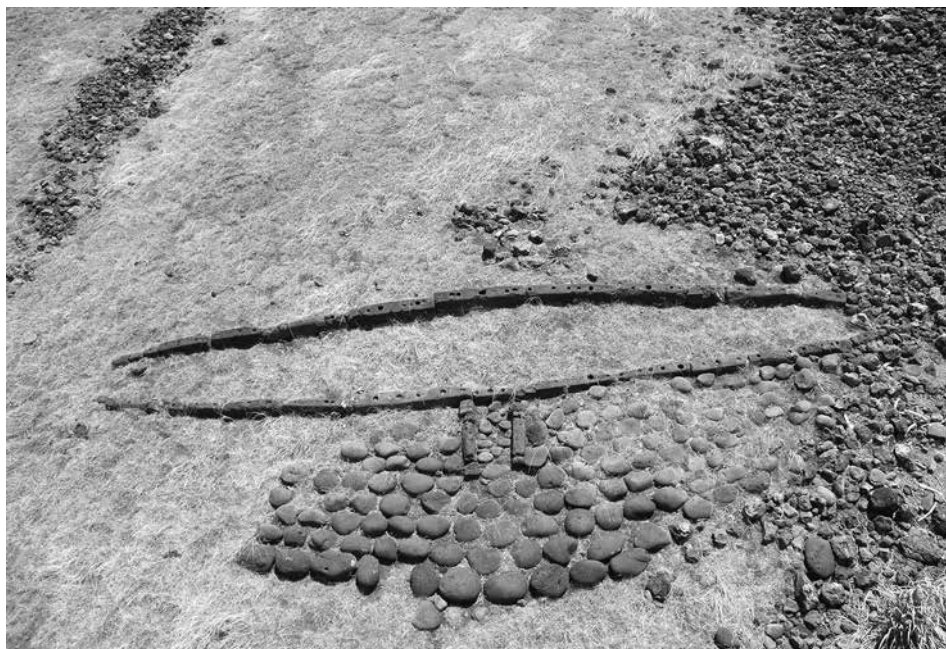


Figure 8.3: A hare paenga adjacent to the Akahanga section of the ara moai. Note the poro pavement extending beyond the entrance (Adam Stanford).



Figure 8.4: Entrance passage into a hare paenga; note the entrance passage is also paved with rounded poro (Adam Stanford).

designation is partially derived from Katherine Routledge's recording that Nagaara, an early nineteenth century chief (*ariki*), only attended the inauguration of dwellings of importance, consequently, 'only houses with stone foundations were thus honoured' (2005 [1919], 243). However, the nature and status of the *hare paenga* appears to have gradually diminished since European contact because she also observes that by the early twentieth century, 'many of the surviving old people were born and brought up in these houses, which are known as "haré paenga" ' (*ibid.*, 216).

A broader picture of habitation in pre-contact Rapa Nui can be drawn from the results of a detailed survey of archaeological remains undertaken by Patrick McCoy in 1968 around Rano Kau in the south-west area of the island. During the survey, houses were classified into three 'major types' of thatched dwellings: elliptical, round, and rectangular (McCoy 1976, 37). The identification of a basic elliptical architecture (Type 1) led to the production of a confusing array of sub-types, styles and forms (*ibid.*, 40–53). Essentially, there were three variants of the elliptical thatched house: *hare paenga* (subtype 1a); an 'intermediate' form of elliptical houses without *paenga*; and elliptical houses with *paenga* but without the holes in their upper surface (subtype 1b).

For Metraux, the presence of *paenga* provided a direct index of social differentiation, basically, 'they were the expression of wealth' and 'it was easier and cheaper to stick rafters into the ground' (1971 [1940], 195). McCoy (1976, 40) initially followed this equation of social differentiation based upon presence or absence of *paenga*, but the discovery and excavation of rectangular and circular houses (e.g. McCoy 1973) made such simplistic equation problematic. Nevertheless, within McCoy's survey area, of the 902 recorded elliptical houses, 852 lacked *paenga*. Identification of the majority of houses was only through the presence of external areas of large beach pebbles (*poro*), examples of which were noticeably smaller than those employed in the *hare paenga*.

Apart from the *hare paenga*, there are records of extremely large elliptical structures, known as *hare nui* (Metraux 1971 [1940], 200). These too were directly associated with *ahu*; for instance, an example recorded in La Pérouse's 1797 atlas is thought to have been observed at *Ahu Te Peu*, on the west coast, where the partial foundations of several enormous structures remain visible today (Pl. 11). The *hare nui* were massive canoe-shapes buildings measuring up to c. 100m in length and 3m in width. Their foundation was formed of correspondingly large rectangular *paenga* of up to 3.6m in length. These were extraordinary structures in all respects and Metraux (*ibid.*) notes that this size of structure could accommodate nearer two hundred individuals and was interpreted as a community house (*hare nui*).

Into the darkness of the house: changing realms

Access into the *hare paenga* was along a narrow passage and through a small hole centrally positioned in the side of the house. The passage was formed by two parallel *paenga*, embedded in the ground and projecting at right angles. These foundation *paenga* supported a low, narrow, tunnel-like passage, which was paved with rounded sea-worn pebbles (*poro*). The entrance *poro* maintained a continuation of the larger pebbles forming

the external pavement (Fig. 8.4). The passage led to little more than a hole, 'eighteen inches or two feet high' in the side of the house (Forster 2000 [1777], vol. 1, 570).

There is clear evidence that the entrances to *hare nui* were at certain times flanked by small stone or wooden statues (see Metraux 1971 [1940], 201, 262–3) (Fig. 8.5). Likewise, the entrance passages of *hare paenga* also appear to have been periodically externally flanked by stone or wood statues or pillars (Van Tilburg 1994, 68; Flenley and Bahn 2002, 94). Metraux cites Loti describing entry into the house of a chief 'whose door was guarded by two idols of granite' (1971 [1940], 198) (Pl. 12). Today there remain upright stone pillars flanking the entrance to a *hare paenga* at *Ahu Te Peu*, confirming McCoy's observation that 'occasionally there were stone pillars on either side of the tunnel-like entrance' of the *hare paenga* (1976, 40). Furthermore, Metraux notes an informant describing how ancient islanders also placed carved wooden images 'on each side of the porches leading to their huts' (1971 [1940], 198). The interesting point here is that just as the eyes of the *moai* could be detached at times when the *ahu* was not in use, so too could the small stone or wooden images be removed from the doorway of the *hare paenga* (Fig. 8.5).

The low, narrow passage constituted a very small space to access the *hare paenga* forcing entry to be 'upon all fours' (Cook 1777, vol. 1, 292) or even prone on the stomach (Eyraud 1866/7 in Metraux 1971 [1940], 199). Apart from the main entrance, Routledge was informed that during the historic period there was a small 'opening near each end by which the food was passed in' (2005 [1919], 216). However, this opening must have been extremely small as it let in little light and 'perfect darkness reigned' (*ibid.*). Indeed, this description of entering into darkness is a consistent feature of early accounts (Metraux 1971 [1940], 199; Van Tilburg 1994, 69). The only beam of light would have come in through the small and narrow entrance, thereby illuminating the large *paenga* often positioned directly opposite. Apart from the darkness, a further feature of the interior was that no form of internal subdivision was present, the interior being described in one case as 'perfectly naked and empty' (Forster 2000 [1777], vol. 1, 570). An appreciation of the material and cosmological qualities of the *hare paenga* as constituting a skin both separating and containing, requires once again focussing on practice.

If we begin to think again about Carsten and Hugh-Jones' contention that, 'the

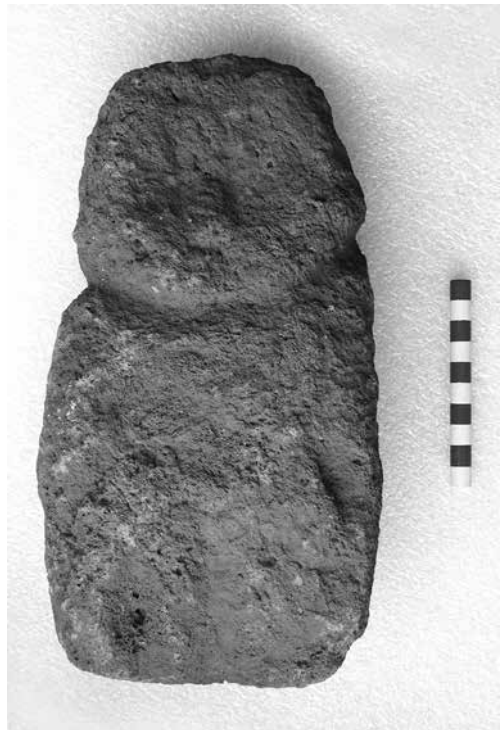


Figure 8.5: Probable portable house moai (Mike Seager Thomas, courtesy of Museo Antropologico P. Sebastian Englert).

relationship of people to houses is one of contained to container' (1995, 42), then the architecture and physical qualities of the *hare paenga* can be appreciated on a broader canvas. The *hare paenga* was a place for sleeping at night, and the presence of stone 'pillows', some decorated, appears common (e.g. Routledge 2005 [1919], 256). Metraux (1971 [1940], 199) quotes Forster in 1777 writing that, 'the natives told us they passed the night in these huts ... they must have been crammed full, unless the generality of people lie in the open air ... or only use them in bad weather'. Metraux (*ibid.*, 199) also quotes Eyraud as writing in 1866/7:

by night time when you could not find other refuge, you are forced to do as others do. Then everyone takes his place ... The door, being in the centre, determines an axis which divides the hut in two equal parts. The heads facing each other on each side of that axis, leaving enough room between them to let pass those who enter or go.

In sleep, the soul was separated from the body and it was during sleep that other souls and ancestors were encountered (e.g. Best 1954 [1922], 8; Handy 1927, 58–9). Hence, sleeping and dreaming constituted a very important immaterial practice (Best 1898, 125). Even today in Rapa Nui the word *po* relates to night, darkness and sleep (S. Fati pers. comm.). Presumably, ancient Rapa Nui cosmology was typically Polynesian as recounted by Handy:

the male principle, light, life, occult knowledge, the east and day (Ao), and the strong right side ... while on the negative side were included nature inferior, the common and unsacred, the physical, the passive, receptive female principle, darkness, destructive influences and death, ignorance, the west and night (Po), and the left or weak side. (1927, 37)

The main elements to draw out of this not unproblematic dual classificatory scheme are the opposed qualities of night and day, darkness and light, and the domains of *Po* and *Ao* (see Gell 1995). The idea of *Po* being an internalized precinct contained by a membrane or shell from an outer *Ao* is a recurrent theme in Polynesian cosmology.

Returning to the *hare paenga*, it is worth considering the physical requirements of the architecture of entry. Passage entails assuming a prone, virtually prostrate, bodily posture, passing between two stone (or wood) images – before and sanctioned by the gaze of ancestors – over a path of *poro*, through a narrow tunnel (that Van Tilburg (1994, 73) compares to the 'birth canal'). Finally, to pass over the threshold and into the darkness of the interior was to enter a differentiated sacred, secret world. Hence, this architecture constitutes an orifice connecting two worlds, *Ao* and *Po*, and, consequently, to pass between worlds requires clear demarcation and sanction.

The experience of darkness is sometimes simplistically equated by the sighted with a state of absolute blindness, but neither should it be considered as necessarily imageless or total. Actual complete darkness is rare in the natural world, except deep in a cave. Instead, a potent sense of 'pitch black' is often a product of a sudden contrast, such as going from light or illumination quickly into darkness. Architecturally, total darkness can mostly only be achieved in windowless, sealed rooms with no direct exit to light, or in rooms and places where at night there is restricted penetration of any outside illumination. *Hare paenga* were likely permeable to a slight degree of light. The thatch that covered their staked superstructure was of plantain leaves and grasses, and may

have allowed a small amount of daytime light to filter in. The entrance to a *hare paenga*, although small in height and narrow with a short covered tunnel in front, would have let in a shaft of daylight or, on occasion, moonlight. Eyraud states of the entrance opening that it lets 'enter enough light to see when you have been inside for a while' (Metraux 1971 [1940], 199). Depending on the time of day and the season, the atmospheric light on Rapa Nui can be very bright due to the intensity of the Pacific sun. On entering and exiting from a *hare paenga* during the day, the contrast between the outside dazzle and inside dimness would have been stark, sudden and 'blackening'.

The visible scale of space and landscape, with potentially open and panoramic seaward vistas, likewise stands in significant contrast to the cramped and limited visual scale of the narrow, low interior of a *hare paenga*. *Hare paenga* are recurrently situated on elevated ground overlooking the ceremonial plaza of an *ahu* with their entrances facing, in the case of the image *ahu*, the eyes of the statues and the sea. Entering a *hare paenga* would have thus involved turning one's back on the sea and the eyes of the *moai*. In most open landscapes at an elevation between 300 and 400m (in daylight), simple sweeping body actions are recognisable at 250m while smaller-scale hand and feet actions becoming clearer between 150 and 190m, and facial expressions from about 10m (Hamilton and Whitehouse 2006). In the restricted daytime dimness of a *hare paenga*, the distance at which information could be discerned with the eyes would have been significantly curtailed. People would only have been able to see outlines or shadows; details of each other, animals and things would only have been visible at close proximity. As described by Pierre Loti in 1871, who entered several *hare paenga* on different daytime occasions, once his eyes were adjusted to the darkness it was possible to see proximate things, often in some detail, including, 'cats and rabbits moving around us', 'chickens', and for the inside of one *hare paenga* he states that, 'a thousand items are carefully attached to the walls: little idols made of black wood, which are wrapped in macramé; spears with flaked flint tips; paddles with human faces; feather headdresses' (Loti 2004 [1872], 67, 74). Perception of colour would also have changed. Outside, Rapa Nui's nature's colours vary with the seasons but largely are blacks/greys (volcanic basalt), greens/yellows/reds (vegetation and red volcanic soil) and blues (sky/sea). Inside a *hare paenga*, the dimness/darkness will have turned clothed, painted or tattooed people, structures and objects a darkish monochrome. The sense of touch would have been more active than colour.

The *hare paenga* would have provided some protection against extremes of weather, from sun, wind and rain, and may have had a sensory microclimate of its own. Eyraud describes them as 'rather hot inside' (Metraux 1971 [1940], 199). The enclosed space of a *hare paenga* interior would have created a claustrophobic experience and, at the same time, perhaps a reassuring womb-like enclosure in which other more direct and intimate senses would be heightened as vision was curtailed. Outside, more often than not, only feet are in contact with the ground and the rest of body moves freely. On entering on hands and knees, the sudden loss of light would have triggered an immediate sense of disorientation. The smell and feel of direct bodily contact with the ground and the constraining touch of the sides of the narrow entrance conduit would have constituted primary sensations. The body would have experienced changes in the hardness and

texture of the surfaces, from the smooth hardness of the *poro* paved entrance corridor to the interior surface that would be of a different temperature, humidity, and feel. Inside a *hare paenga* most people would have been sleeping prone or sitting down and in contact with bare volcanic earth, or the straw mats ('carpet of braided reeds') that Loti describes (2004 [1872], 73). When a *hare paenga* was occupied there would have been additional sensory experiences relating to the close proximity of bodies of people and animals buffeting and pressing on one another. This, combined with a lack of fresh air, would all have been intensified by the narrowness and lack of height of the building and its entrance. The touch of skin-on-skin and skin against fur or feathers would all have been potentially experienced in the confines of a *hare paenga*. Loti wrote vividly of the personal intimacy of a peopled *hare paenga* interior: 'inside the hut, which smells like an animal den, it is impossible to see anything, in particular because of the crowd of people milling around and their shadows, it is also impossible to stand up and, after the fresh and invigorating breeze outside, the air is barely breathable' (2005, 129), and 'little by little, I become impregnated with the odor of a wild man and a savage' (2004 [1872], 70).

Inside, external sounds will have been muffled by the thatch superstructure and experienced differently, although likely not wholly obscured. Loti (2004 [1872], 73) mentions waking up alone in a *hare paenga* with a silence, 'that is broken only by the distant sounds of the sea on the coral reefs and, occasionally, by the noise of the reeds of the hut as they rustle in a gust of wind'. Rapa Nui has a constant Pacific breeze and sound is directional; personal experience today suggests that the sounds of the few animals on the island such as cockerels and sea birds can travel far. Within a *hare paenga*, these outside sounds would still be heard, but they would be muted and less directional. Conversely, the activities of the darkened inside would not only have been rendered 'invisible' to those outside, but smells and sounds would have been contained by the thatch and matting, too.

Looking out and emerging from a *hare paenga* would have been a reversed sensory experience to that of darkness, restricted entry and enclosure. Loti describes (2004 [1872], 73) how, 'suddenly a ray of sunshine bursts through the hole that serves as a door, I see the shadow of one of the idols that guards the door'. Emerging from a *hare paenga* involved passing these shadowy guards, into light, to experience the impact of breezes and other weather phenomena on the skin and senses, and more often than not, the clear sounds of the sea, and a renewed colour and olfactory palate. As the body unfolded from prone to upright and the eyes became elevated they would have refocused on distance and landscape vistas. It would also have been a release from the close sensory experiences of an intimate womb-like place.

Potentially, entering a *hare paenga* served as an everyday reminder of the yet more tortuous, extended and heightened sensory experience of entering Rapa Nui's family caves, which were used for burial or dying and the safe-keeping of ancestral objects. Both required difficult entry through narrow 'holes' into voids of reduced height and caves described as half the height of a man (Heyerdahl 1958). Heyerdahl (*ibid.*) reported that Father Sebastian Englert spoke of how people crawled into caves to die when they knew death was near. Caves were also used, by tradition, to sleep in (Englert 2003 [1936], 117). These transitions that we have discussed, between outside and inside,

between upright and prone, between openness, light and multiple sensory experiences, and enclosure, darkness and intimacy, place the *hare paenga* within a conceptual world that was at the core of the island's spinal structure of underground caves and their association with ancestry and death.

Monumental architecture and the *hare paenga*

To finally assess the architecture of the *hare paenga* and relate it to the broader pattern of monumental architecture on Rapa Nui, requires an appreciation of the dominance of the wrapping or containing structuring principle in pre-contact Polynesian life. When Carsten and Hugh-Jones called for an 'alternative language of the house' (1995, 2), the initial area identified for comment was that the house and the body were intrinsically linked. They developed this theme further with the statement that, 'the house is an extension of the person; like an extra skin, carapace or second layer of clothes, it serves as much to reveal and display as it does hide and protect' (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995, 2). This characterization elevates its physical constituents as a membrane or skin, and to some degree establishes 'the relationship of people to houses is one of contained to container' (*ibid.*, 42). Islands have also been characterized as containers (e.g. François 2003, 426), and the crucial quality of containers is containment, and the main concern transgression.

Transgression appears to be the dominant theme of architectural elaboration in both the *ahu* and *hare paenga*. To move from the light, everyday world of *Ao* to the sacred realm of darkness *Po* is clearly a transgression of great import that requires strict control; the dominant form of sanction is the image of ancestor or deity. However, more subtle material devices provide a metaphoric and metonymic extension between these different areas of human experience. For example, *poro*, rounded pebbles created by the pounding surf and emblematic of the transitional qualities of the seashore, pave the entrance passage of the *hare paenga* and canoe ramps of the image *ahu*. At one level, the seashore, as a component of landscape, is displaced and redeployed as a symbolic resource in the architecture of the house (see Hamilton *et al.* 2011). At another, its transformatory qualities participate in and 'lubricate' the transition between *Ao* and *Po*, from the light into the darkness.

There is, however, an interesting distinction between the monumental *ahu* complex and the comparatively small-scale *hare paenga*. In fact, it is more of a reversal. Although house and island can be portrayed as containers, that which is being contained is different. The *ahu* wrap the island in a ring of monumentality and the island, as a container, is the domain of people: of *Ao*. Conversely, the house contains the darkness and sacred darkness of *Po*. Interestingly, in both cases the ancestral beings embodied in stone images face outwards from the sacred domain towards the place of humanity.

To conclude, we argue that in ancient Rapa Nui an architectural homology was embodied in both *ahu* and *hare paenga*. In short, to enter the dark interior of the *hare paenga* was to pass from the everyday realm of *Ao* to the sacred realm of *Po* and transgress the skin or membrane separating these cosmological opposites. Such transgression can

also be recognized in the formalized passage from land to sea, again associated with the dual realms of *Po* and *Ao*. The *moai* gaze inwards towards the land and to pass from the everyday (*Ao*) to the ocean – a conduit to *Hawaiki* (*Po*), or rather *Hiva* on Rapa Nui, is to pass through the monumental wrapping separating two domains. In both cases, transgression involves passing before the eyes of the ancestors and over *poro*. Just as Gell notes, the maintenance of differentiation (and passage between differentiation) was, ‘the source of certain ontological anxieties that played an enormous part in Polynesian life’ (1995, 23). Such anxieties and their alleviation were realized as much in the architecture and materiality of the house as in the monumental architecture that fames Rapa Nui to this very day.

Acknowledgements

This paper was given at *The Archaeology of Darkness* conference at I.T. Sligo in 2012, and Marion and Robert cannot be thanked enough for organizing such an excellent conference. We would also like to thank them for their editorial comments and patience with this paper, which also benefited from comments and suggestions by an anonymous referee.

Explorations into the ideas of wrapping and the material manifestations of the membrane or skin separating the domains of *Po* and *Ao* have formed part of the Rapa Nui: Landscapes of Construction Project, which is currently supported by AHRC funding. We would particularly like to thank team members Jane Downes, Mike Seager Thomas, Kate Welham and Ruth Whitehouse for broader discussions of *hare paenga*. We also appreciate the critical comments of Rosemary Joyce and Susan Kus following a presentation of a version of this contribution at the ‘Holy Houses’ session of the 2012 SAA conference in Memphis, Tennessee.

Mike Seager Thomas researched and identified possible examples of ‘house idols’ both in the Museo Antropológico Padre Sebastián Englert (MAPSE) store and in other museums outside Rapa Nui. The Rapa Nui: Landscapes of Construction Project is based at University College London (S. Hamilton), University of Manchester (C. Richards) and Bournemouth University (K. Welham).

References

- Barber, I. 2003. Sea, land and fish: spatial relationships and the archaeology of South Island Maori fishing. *World Archaeology* 35 (3), 434–48.
- Bausch, C. 1978. *Po* and *Ao*, analysis of an ideological conflict in Polynesia. *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 34 (61), 169–85.
- Best, E. 1898. Omens and superstitious beliefs of the Maori. *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 7 (3), 119–36.
- Best, E. 1954 [1922]. *Spiritual and mental concepts of the Maori*. Dominion Museum Monograph. Wellington, R. E. Owen.
- Best, E. 1976 [1925]. *The Maori canoe*. Dominion Museum Bulletin 7. Wellington, Government Printer.

- Best, E. 1977 [1929]. *Fishing methods and devices of the Maori*. Dominion Museum Bulletin 12. Wellington, Government Printer.
- Carsten, J. and Hugh-Jones, S. 1995. Introduction, about the house – Lévi-Strauss and beyond. In J. Carsten and S. Hugh-Jones (eds.) *About the house: Lévi-Strauss and beyond*, 1–46. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Cook, J. 1777. *A voyage towards the South Pole and round the world (1772–75), Volume 1* (2nd edition). London, W. Strahan & T. Cadell.
- Emory, K. P. 1975. *Material culture of the Tuamotu archipelago*. Pacific Anthropological Records 22. Honolulu, Bernice P. Bishop Museum.
- Englert, S. 2003 [1936]. *Legends of Easter Island*. Rapa Nui, Rapa Nui Press.
- Ferdon, E. N. 1981. A possible source of origin of the Easter Island boat-shaped house. *Asian Perspectives* 22 (1), 1–8.
- Flenley, J. R. and Bahn, P. 2002. *The enigma of Easter Island*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Forster, G. 2000 [1777]. *A voyage round the world in H. M. B.'s Sloop Resolution, commanded by Captain James Cook during the years 1772–1775*. London, B. White.
- François, A. 2003. Of men, hills and winds: space directionals in Mwotlap. *Oceanic Linguistics* 42 (2), 407–37.
- Gell, A. 1993. *Wrapping in images: tattooing in Polynesia*. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Gell, A. 1995. Closure and multiplication: an essay on Polynesian cosmology and ritual. In D. de Coppet and A. Iteanu (eds.) *Cosmos and society in Oceania*, 21–56. Oxford, Berg.
- Gladwin, T. 1970. *East is a big bird: navigation and logic on Puluwat Atoll*. Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press.
- Goldman, I. 1970. *Ancient Polynesian society*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Hamilton, S. 2010. Back to the sea: Rapa Nui's *ahu* seascapes. In P. Wallin and H. Martinsson-Wallin (eds.) *Migration, identity and culture*, 167–82. Gotland, Gotland University Press.
- Hamilton, S., Seager Thomas, M. and Whitehouse, R. 2011. Say it with stone: constructing with stones on Easter Island. *World Archaeology* 43 (2), 167–90.
- Hamilton, S. and Whitehouse, R. 2006. Phenomenology in practice: towards a methodology for a 'subjective' approach. *European Journal of Archaeology* 9, 31–71.
- Handy, E. S. C. 1927. *Polynesian religion*. Honolulu, Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin 34.
- Heidegger, M. 1978. *Basic writings* (D. F. Krell ed.). London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Heyerdahl, T. 1958. *Aku-Aku: the secret of Easter Island*. London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd.
- Heyerdahl, T. 1989. *Easter Island: the mystery solved*. New York, Random House.
- Heyerdahl, T. and Ferdon, E. N. (eds.) 1961. *Reports of the Norwegian archaeological expedition to Easter Island and the east Pacific Vol. 1: the archaeology of Easter Island*. London, Allen & Unwin.
- Hyslop, C. 2002. Hiding behind trees on Ambae: spatial reference in an Oceanic language of Vanuatu. In G. Bennardo (ed.) *Representing space in Oceania: culture in language and mind*, 47–76. Canberra, Pacific Linguistics, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University.
- Kirch, P. V. 2000. *On the Road of the Winds: an archaeological history of the Pacific Islands*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Lee, G. 1992. *The rock art of Easter Island: symbols of power, prayers to the gods*. Los Osos, Institute of Archaeology, University of California.
- Loti, P. (alias Julien Viaud) 2004 [1872]. Diary of a cadet on the warship *La Flore*. In A. M. Altman (trans.) *Easter Island 1864–1877, the reports of Eugene Eyraud, Hippolyte Roussel, Pierre Loti, and Alphonse Pinart*. Los Osos, Easter Island Foundation.
- Loti, P. (alias Julien Viaud) 2005. Diary of a cadet on the warship *La Flore* – 1872 (trans. Ann M. Altman). *Rapa Nui Journal* 19 (2), 127–39.

- Love, C. M. 1993. Easter Island *ahu* revisited. In S. R. Fisher (ed.) *Easter Island studies*, 103–11. Oxbow Monograph 32. Oxford, Oxbow Books.
- Malo, D. 1951 [1898]. *Hawaiian antiquities*. Honolulu, Bernice P. Bishop Museum Special Publication 2.
- Martinsson-Wallin, H. 1994. *Ahu – the ceremonial stone structures of Easter Island*. Uppsala, Societas Archaeologica Upsaliensis.
- McCoy, P. 1973. Excavation of a rectangular house on the east rim of Rano Kau, Easter Island. *Archaeology and Physical Anthropology in Oceania* 8 (1), 51–67.
- McCoy, P. C. 1976. *Easter Island settlement patterns in the late prehistoric and protohistoric periods*. Bulletin 5. New York, Easter Island Committee, International Fund for Monuments Inc.
- Metraux 1971 [1940]. *Ethnology of Easter Island*. Honolulu, Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin 160.
- Mulloy, W. 1995. *The Easter Island bulletins of William Mulloy to the World Monuments Fund*, New York. Houston, Easter Island Foundation.
- Orbell, M. 1985. *The natural world of the Maori*. Auckland, David Bateman Ltd.
- Richards, C. 2008. The substance of Polynesian voyaging. *World Archaeology* 40 (2), 206–23.
- Richards, C., Croucher, K., Paoa, T., Parish, T., Tucki, E. and Welham, K. 2011. Road my body goes: re-creating ancestors from stone at the great moai quarry of Rano Raraku, Rapa Nui (Easter Island). *World Archaeology* 43 (2), 191–210.
- Routledge, K. 2005 [1919]. *The mystery of Easter Island*. Rapa Nui, Museum Press.
- Shore, B. 1989. Mana and tapu. In A. Howard and R. Borofsky (eds.) *Developments in Polynesian ethnology*, 137–74. Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press.
- Skjølsvold, A. 1961. The stone statues and quarries of Rano Raraku. In T. Heyerdahl and E. Ferdon Jr (eds.) *Reports of the Norwegian Archaeological Expedition to Easter Island and the East Pacific. Volume 1: the archaeology of Easter Island*, 339–79. London, Allen & Unwin.
- Thomas, W. 1990. *Marquesan societies: inequality and political transformation in Eastern Polynesia*. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Van Tilburg, J. A. 1994. *Easter Island: archaeology, ecology and culture*. London, British Museum Press.
- Van Tilburg, J. A. 2003. *Among stone giants: the life of Katherine Routledge and her remarkable expedition to Easter Island*. New York, Scribner.